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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: OCTOBER 05, 2009

Summary: Reports of the "killing of eight U.S. troops in Taliban attack in Afghanistan" dominated headlines in several major newspapers on Monday. U.S. National Security Advisor Jones' statement praising that "Pakistan army and the government have done much better against militancy since March" received prominent display. Newspapers also highlighted reports that "Pakistan has offered the U.S. to launch a joint action against Taliban Shura in Quetta if the Shura is present in the Balochistan's capital." Pegged to this story, some dailies reported Foreign Minister Qureshi as saying that "Quetta Shura has lost its existence, as a number of its activists have already died or are active in Afghanistan." Several major newspapers quoted Punjab Chief Minister Sharif as terming the Kerry-Lugar Bill as "negation of country's sovereignty" and highlighted his comments that "any amount of foreign assistance at the cost of freedom and prestige of the country was not acceptable." Reports that "Pakistan Army is all set to launch a decisive operation against the Taliban in South Waziristan" received extensive media coverage. All major dailies ran a report that the "tribal chiefs and elders in North Waziristan warned of offensive if drone attacks continued."

Most newspapers ran editorials on different local themes including the extended power outage and the possible fallout. However some dailies editorialized the overall security situation of the country. Commenting on the impending military operation in Waziristan Agency, the second largest nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt," observed that "despite paying a heavy price for friendship with the U.S., our rulers are bent upon starting an operation in Waziristan, creating more problems for the nation and endangering the country's security." The Lahore-based liberal English language newspaper, "Daily Times," noted that "there is no gainsaying the fact that the Taliban are not finished, but it would be unrealistic not to take account of the fact that their leadership has been literally decapitated." End Summary.

News Stories

"Militants Driven From Swat Involved: Afghanistan; Eight U.S. Troops Die In Taliban Attack" "Dawn" (10/05)

"Hundreds of militants armed with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades stormed a pair of remote outposts near the Pakistan border, killing eight U.S. soldiers and capturing more than 20 Afghan troops in the deadliest assault against U.S. forces in more than a year, military officials said on Sunday."

"Pakistan Doing Much Better Since March: U.S." "Daily Times," "The News" (10/05)

"The Pakistan army and the country's government have done much better since March when they announced their strategy against the

Taliban on their side of the border, U.S. National Security Adviser James Jones said on Sunday. Appearing in CBS's Face the Nation Program, he praised Islamabad's recent gains against the Taliban."

"Pak-U.S. Joint Action In Quetta" "The Post" (10/05)

"Pakistan has offered the U.S. to launch a joint action against Taliban Shura in Quetta if the Shura is present in the Balochistan's capital.... The officials said the Pakistani army leadership has offered the U.S. leadership to send their personnel to Balochistan to confirm that Qaeda and Taliban leadership is not in Quetta.... However, officials said that the U.S. envoys have no right to hurl baseless claims about presence of Taliban Shura in Quetta."

"Quetta Shura Has Lost Its Existence: Qureshi" "Dawn," "The News" (10/05)

"During an Interview with the Los Angeles Times, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has elucidated that the 'Quetta Shura' has lost its existence, as a number of its activists have already been killed or are active in Afghanistan."

"Qureshi Urges U.S. To Build Partnership Of Trust" "Dawn" (10/05)

"Asserting political and military leadership's commitment to wipe out terrorism and a strong public mood against militants, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has urged the United States to build a more trusting partnership with Pakistan."

"Shahbaz Opposes Aid under Kerry-Lugar Bill" "The Nation" (10/05)

"Punjab chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif on Sunday termed Kerry-Lugar Bill as negation of country's sovereignty, saying any amount of foreign assistance at the cost of freedom and prestige of the country was not acceptable to the proud people of Pakistan."

"National Assembly To Discuss Sugar Crisis, Kerry-Lugar Bill Today" "Daily Times" (10/50)

"The National Assembly is set to reconvene today (Monday) after almost two months with opposition parties looking to seek explanations from the government on issues such as the sugar crisis, the Kerry-Lugar bill and the operations of foreign security agencies in the country."

"Billions in U.S. Aid Never Reached Pakistan Army" "The Nation" (10/05)

"The United States has long suspected that much of the billions of dollars it has sent Pakistan to battle militants has been diverted to the domestic economy and other causes, such as fighting India. Now the scope and longevity of the misuse is becoming clear: Between 2002 and 2008, while Al Qaeda regrouped, only \$500 million of the \$6.6 billion in American aid actually made it to the Pakistani military, two army generals told an American news agency, reported a private TV channel."

"U.S. Believes Pakistan Prepared For Waziristan Assault" "Dawn," "The Nation" (10/05)

"Pakistan has mobilized enough forces and equipment to launch a long awaited ground offensive against Taliban militants in their South Waziristan stronghold near the Afghan border, U.S. defense officials said on Sunday. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of discussing Pakistani military planning."

"Pentagon Trying To Free Up Choppers For Pakistan" "Daily Times" (10/05)

"A U.S. military official has said that an assault by Pakistani ground forces in South Waziristan 'can still be effective' despite

some shortages, and the Pentagon is trying to free up helicopters and other equipment for Pakistan 'as soon as possible.'"

"Army All Set To Launch Decisive Operation In South Waziristan"
"Daily Times" (10/50)

"The army is all set to launch a decisive operation against the Taliban in South Waziristan, after Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan chief Baitullah Mehsud's death and months of a troop build-up in the area. Defence sources said the army had changed tactics, pursuing a cautious policy aimed at choking off the enemy by sealing entry points and bagging the support of groups and tribal elders opposed to the Taliban."

"Elders Warn Of Offensive If Drone Attacks Continue" "Daily Times,"
"The News" (10/50)

"Tribal chiefs and elders in North Waziristan Agency on Sunday warned the United States of a possible alliance with Afghan tribal chiefs to fight U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan if Washington did not stop drone attacks in the Tribal Areas. The elders made the decision at a grand Jirga held in North Waziristan's headquarters Miranshah."

"Accord With Mullah Nazir Intact, Says Military" "Dawn" (10/05)

"Military authorities assured a grand Jirga of Ahmedzai Wazirs in Wana on Sunday that a peace accord reached with the Mullah Nazir group in South Waziristan in 2007 remained intact. The assurance was given by Maj-Gen Sajjad Wazir and other military officers."

"Fazl Offers To Mediate Between Govt. And Taliban" "Dawn," "The News" (10/05)

"As security forces are all set to launch a major offensive in the tribal region of South Waziristan, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the chief of his own faction of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, has offered to 'mediate' between the government and militants to avert another crisis, Maulana Fazl told a conference of Ulema and Madressah teachers in Peshawar on Sunday.

"Militants Melting Into Settled Areas" "Dawn" (10/05)

"The militants fleeing Malakand division and parts of Federally Administered Tribal Areas have become more of a headache for the law enforcement agencies as they are disappearing in the settled districts of NWFP, sources say."

"Forces Claim Killing 9 Militants in Swat" "The News" (10/05)

"The security forces claimed killing nine militants during search and clearance operations in different parts of Swat Valley, a press release of the Pakistan Army-run Swat Media Center said on Sunday."

"Six Militants Killed In Malakand" "Dawn" (10/05)

"Three local Taliban Commanders identified as Noorul Amin, Fazal Rabi and Younus, and three militants were killed in Banjeer area of Malakand on Sunday."

"Taliban Confirm Uzbek Commander's Death In Drone Attack" "The News" (10/50)

"A senior Afghan Taliban Commander has confirmed that dreaded Uzbek militant commander Qari Tahir Yuldashev was killed in the U.S. drone attack during the last week of August in south Waziristan."

"Man Involved In NATO Terminal Attacks Arrested" "Daily Times" (10/05)

"Police on Sunday claimed the arrest of a member of a gang involved in attacks on NATO terminals, and seized stolen goods from his possession, police sources said."

"U.S. Asked To Engage Afghan Pashtuns In Dialogue" "Dawn" (10/05)

"Senior U.S. security officials consulted their colleagues from Pakistan and Afghanistan in Washington this week on possible changes

in America's policies for their region.... The Obama administration believes that it has to finalize a new strategy by the end of this month.... Pakistan urged the Americans to engage Afghan Pashtuns, including some Taliban groups, in a dialogue aimed at peacefully resolving the dispute."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Preparations For Waziristan Operation," an editorial in the second largest nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (10/05)

"Despite paying a heavy price for friendship with the U.S., our rulers are bent upon starting an operation in Waziristan, creating more problems for the nation and endangering the country's security. This strategy would not get any public support, while the U.S. will not be satisfied even at this obedience. In fact, it [the U.S.] has already set another target for them - drone strikes from Quetta to Karachi."

"Taliban Targeting Of Peshawar," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/05)

"Peshawar has been hit recently by a car-bomb of great intensity arousing fears of a Taliban comeback, but any alarmist reaction must be framed against the recent developments and the desperation they have caused among the terrorists. There is no gainsaying the fact that the Taliban are not finished, but it would be unrealistic not to take account of the fact that their leadership has been literally decapitated. The one merit of the non-centralized and disorganized movement is that it doesn't die immediately after its centre is taken out."

"Questions on FATA Op," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/05)

"As for the impending launch of a conventional military action in FATA, it is riddled with problems, not the least of which is the fate of the local people already being held hostage by the militants, especially the foreigners, on the one hand, and being killed in U.S. drone attacks on the other. Also, the timing of the operation is strange given that winter is approaching. So a legitimate question is why now, when the targeted attacks strategy was working?"

"Don't Turn Pak Into A Refugee State," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (10/05)

"While the Government is still in the midst of coping with the resettlement and rehabilitation of IDPs from Swat and Malakand, there are clear indications that a full-scale operation against militants in South Waziristan is on the card. The UN has warned that if the FATA operation begins, there would be a great influx of IDPs leaving their homes and largescale arrangements to evacuate the people would have to be made ahead of the operation.... On the basis of that experience we expect that efforts would be made to minimize the displacement of people and operation to cleanse South Waziristan from the menace of terrorism would be in specific areas on the basis of intelligence information."

"Dead Or Alive?," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/05)

"For weeks now controversy has continued to brew over whether Hakeemullah Mehsud, the man who we are told replaced Baitullah Mehsud as Chief of the TTP, is dead or alive.... What we do know is that the Taliban for the moment remain a potent force, able to stage attacks. There is then apparent need to act decisively against the militants regardless of who is leading them.... If the death of Hakeemullah can be confirmed, it would no doubt act to further weaken the Taliban."

"An Anti-terror Mechanism," an op-ed by Iqbal Ahmad Khan in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/05)

"There is need for creating a high-level mechanism to formulate a

coherent and comprehensive anti-terror policy and to ensure civilian oversight of the war on terror.... Civilian control and direction of counter-terrorism measures would only be possible if the civilian leadership is armed with comprehensive and latest knowledge of the war on terror.... total elimination of terrorists and terrorism from Pakistan is vital for our future. Our integrity, progress and prosperity are intrinsically tied to the outcome of the war on terror. The early establishment of an effective counter-terrorism mechanism would greatly facilitate our efforts."

"Implications of U.S. Aid," an op-ed by Talat Masood in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/05)

"U.S. Congress voted last Wednesday to triple aid to Pakistan to 1.5 billion dollars every year for five years. The long-term U.S. commitment that aims to build a strategic partnership with Pakistan has generated a serious controversy.... There is however danger of a backlash the way the legislation is worded. One, if it perceived as a dictation it could further fuel anti-Americanism and anti-Zardari if not anti-government sentiment. Secondly, even if the government was genuine in the faithful implementation of these conditions, it would not be possible to achieve these conditions in the time frame that U.S. expects. A fragile civilian government whose leadership is uninspiring and a military that is overstretched fighting Taliban in the west and guarding the eastern frontier will find it difficult to open up new fronts with the Jihadis.... One hopes Obama being far more receptive and amenable to adjustment, unlike his predecessor Bush, would respond by pursuing a more balanced and nuanced approach towards Pakistan."

"The Kerry-Lugar Offerings," an op-ed by Shahzad Chaudhry in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/05)

"Fine words and noble ideals have not been stated before; but it begs the question: is the U.S. going to ensure democracy in Pakistan? When have they ever been able to do so before? Now, if this is not insecurity and a grab for resources, what else is?... I say take the elements of social development strategy from the bill (Kerry-Lugar Bill); show some steel to retain national dignity on the rest; and see if the \$1.5 billion will still hold. It should, if the U.S. is so genuinely interested in seeing Pakistan stable. The money is anyway a supplement and not supplant."

"Capitulating Terms Of Kerry-Lugar Bill," an op-ed by Abdus Sattar Ghazi in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (10/05)

"The capitulating terms for the new five year U.S. aid to Pakistan came at a time when the Pakistani media is buzzing with stories about the operation of the ill-famed Blackwater mercenary army in Islamabad and Peshawar, the capital of North Western Frontier Province.... Many people in Pakistan believe that Afghanistan, India, Israel and U.S. are involved in the current turmoil and violence in the tribal areas of Northern Pakistan and Baluchistan to destabilize the country."

"A Timely Reality Check," an op-ed by Khalid Iqbal in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/05)

"Reality check was long overdue pertaining to the American war fighting strategy and capability in Afghanistan.... Afghanistan is a strange black hole that can smilingly suck in the entire American military might. It better be left alone; at least militarily! As regards resolve and commitment, America as a nation appears to be loosing both.... This is the time to execute an exit strategy. Options are foreclosing rapidly and delay in this regard would make it painful to end the occupation. There is a need to cobble together a broad based government, represented by each significant segment of the Afghan society.... People of the region need a healing touch and a hope of enduring peace. Ending and not strengthening the occupation is need of the hour!"

"Israel's Shelling Of Gaza Strip," an editorial note in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir.25,000) (10/05)

"The reason for Israeli excesses is that the Muslim countries, including the OIC and the Arab League, have never paid due attention to the Palestine issue. The situation can spin out of control if this [Israeli aggression] continues. Not only should Israel's latest aggression be curbed but efforts to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict must also be intensified."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson